



The Walk to the White House

Carl Schreiter

This is the end of an era and the dawn of a new age. The art of the spoken word has finally retraced its steps back to the White House. The new tenant at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Barack Hussein Obama, is arguably the best speaker to grace the American political stage in decades.

His predecessor, by an ironic twist of fate, may lay claim to being one of the most quoted American presidents in history. Bush's consistent mangling of the English language has afforded him a new linguistic category, known as Bushisms and is simply the study of how not to speak. Barack Obama, by contrast, proves how to get it right, how to speak persuasively and how to win people over.

Let alone winning elections.

(including you) are at liberty to use in their persuasive undertakings.

Through a consistent use, firstly, of fundamental persuasive appeals – *Logos, Ethos and Pathos* – with, second, a persistent adherence to the principles of *arrangement and structure*, Obama proves that anyone can achieve great communication time after time in different situations and in front of different audiences.

Firstly, Obama combines the three fundamental appeals of persuasion with great ease. And to great effect. For example, in his “Plan for change” campaign video¹, he applies *Logos*, proposing rational, measurable actions like “Reform our tax system to give a \$1,000 tax break to the middle class” along with ethically or *Ethos* driven measures



So, what's the secret? Is there such a thing as Obamaisms to counter the miseries of Bushisms or possibly an element of uniqueness, something Obamaesque?

Let us take a look at two of the tools that helped Obama craft and deliver momentous speeches – tools with which a path leading all the way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was carved out. These are tools that all speakers, presenters and orators

like “cracking down on lobbyists” and “preventing back-room deal making”. Last but not least he proposes a *Pathos*-fuelled, proud, protectionist “plan for energy ‘made in America’ that will free us from our dependence on middle-east oil”.

Over the course of 2 minutes he offers tax breaks, shows a determination to go after lobbyists and invokes a promise of a nation enjoying greater independence. Wow! These are carefully crafted key

¹See [this video on YouTube](#)

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Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



Welcome to our
33rd Journal – Spring 2009!

In this edition:
The Walk to the White House –
by Carl Schreiter

Would you like to know the secrets to Barack Obama's success? Carl Schreiter explains the presentational tools that have helped Obama to the White House. They could help you too!

Do you speak Quango? – by
Alastair Grant

Ever been befuddled by someone's lingo or jargon? Alastair Grant gives expert advice on how to reduce jargon and lower barriers.

The Rain in Spain... – by Ewan
Pearson

Ewan Pearson explains how accurate articulation can help you persuade and communicate with impact.

The Art and Business of
Networking – Part 2 – The
Networking Bore – by Tim Farish

Learn what NOT to do at networking functions. Tim Farish provides some top tips to avoid becoming a member of the Networking “Hall of Shame”.

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messages that bear the hallmark of rhetorical robustness and a true sense of urgency. You should aim for this too.

Secondly, Obama's oratory strength rests equally on his ability to build *contexts* and *backgrounds* and even more importantly "to *tell stories*". These are usually powerful narrative accounts preceding key messages and a crucial segment in his overall speech structure.

Like all accomplished orators, Obama knows the importance of *Dispositio*, or the order in which a speech should be delivered; of which contexts and backgrounds constitute an early part. The suggested order in *Dispositio* is as follows:

- Introduction*
- Context/Background*
- Proposition*
- Key messages/Arguments*
- Counterarguments*
- Conclusion*

The purpose of the *introduction* is for you to attract attention and to establish credibility with the audience.

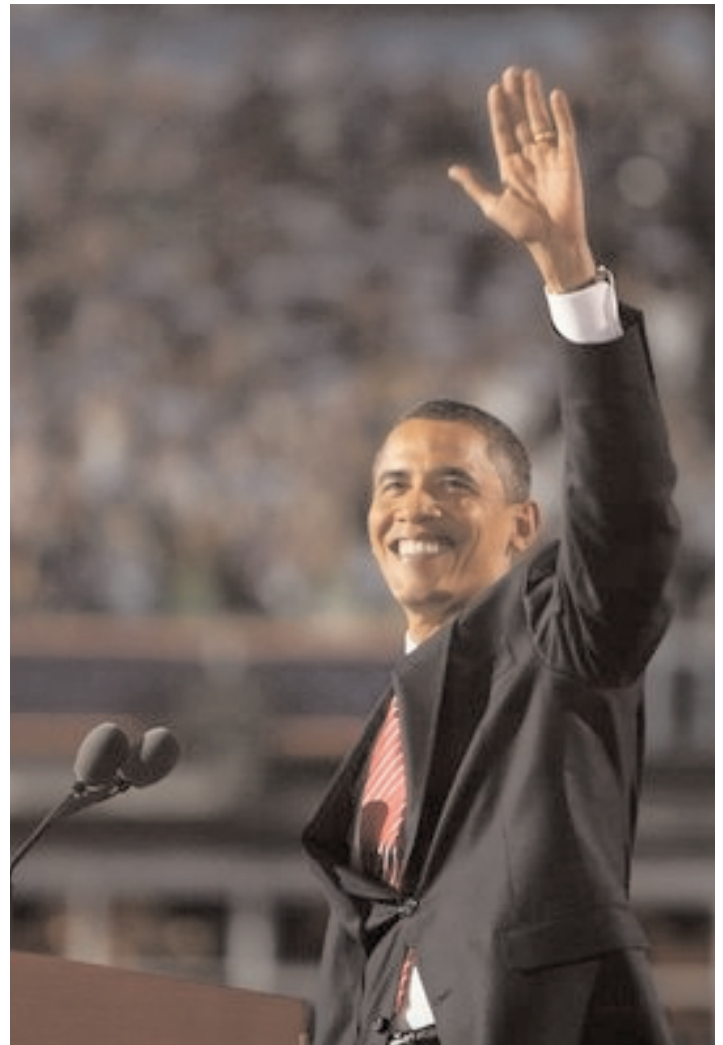
Speaking in Berlin, Obama greeted the crowd with the following words "I come to Berlin as so many of my countrymen have come before, although tonight I speak to you not as a candidate for president but as a citizen of the United States and a fellow citizen of the world".

This is a personal branding statement of sorts as Obama positions himself as a citizen speaking to other citizens. Effectively, he decides who he wants to be there and then. In contrast, many a campaign speech started with the short and affirmative "Thank you", interspersed by applause and cheers and the occasional "We love you" to which Obama replied, "I love you back". Powerful, yet distinctively different introductions and both bearing testimony to Obama's ability to seize the moment.

Following the introduction is the *context/background*:

Here you give a narrative account, combining recent events, the current state of affairs with problems and possible threats and opportunities.

Obama's narratives bear testament to his ability to capture things that matter the most to most people. He is a narrator, a reporter, a storyteller whose tales are based on real themes, real problems, real threats. And more importantly, tales that feature real Americans facing real challenges. They may be "rich or poor", "black or white",



"Latino or Asian". They may hail "from Iowa or New Hampshire". These 'doubles' are known as *Syntheon* – a rhetorical figure whereby two words are joined by convention for emphasis. And for further dramatic effect, Obama frequently uses short, emotionally charged statements like "There is something happening in America". "Change is what's happening in America." He always substantiates claims and observations through data and even statistics, and you should too. This ensures accuracy and factual objectivity: e.g. "In record

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numbers you came out", "600,000 Americans have lost their jobs since January", "Pay checks are flat".

With the context in place and a sense of trust established between you and your audience, as in "We understand each other", you move to the *Proposition* – the overall message or the overriding claim.

For example, in Obama's now legendary "Yes We Can" Speech, he addressed audience members by entrusting them with a challenging task: "You can be the new majority who can lead this nation out of a long political darkness".

Following the Proposition is the main body of the speech where you offer *key messages*, arguments and proof in support of your proposition. The appeal to *Logos* is emphasised here. However, all three persuasive appeals, including *Ethos* and *Pathos* should be employed to ensure maximum persuasive effect.

In his "Yes We Can" speech Obama claims that making health care affordable is possible with the help of the new majority: "We can tell the drug and insurance industry that while they get a seat at the table they don't get to buy every chair". He then proceeds to introduce plans that will "end the tax breaks for corporations" in order to put the tax breaks in the pockets of those who deserve it, that is, the hard working people he so aptly described only minutes ago in the background. Here, Obama strikes a compelling balance between *Logos* and *Ethos* as in 'more cash in the pockets of those who deserve it the most'.

Shared responsibility to achieve real change was a key theme in the Obama campaign – a theme from which he consistently extracted key messages "It's not just about what I will do as President, it is also about what you can do". Here's a resounding echo of a predecessor who professed change with equal conviction, determination and perseverance – John F Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country".

The *counterarguments* or the *refutation* comes after your section on *key messages/arguments*. As the names indicate, this section of a speech is designed to present and then challenge the counterarguments of your opponents or to diffuse any uncertainties that the key messages may have given rise to.

In his 'Plan for Change' speech, Obama presents a counterargument in the form of a confession:

"Doing these things won't be easy" – a confession that is likely to concur with the overall sentiment of people whose trust he is working so hard to earn. But no sooner does he diffuse the difficulties inherent in any change program by appealing to the fighting spirit of his fellow citizens: "But we are Americans. We've met tough challenges before and we can again". Hope is once again restored.

Following the *counterarguments*, your *conclusion* principally employs appeals through emotion and calls to action, and will, at times, also include a summary of the key points.

Here's how Obama concludes his 'Yes We Can' speech: "Yes we can heal this nation. Yes we can repair this world. Yes we can". This is an emotionally charged confidence booster fuelled by the almost ecstatic energy filling the auditorium, and probably the kind of environment with which Obama is closely associated.

However, Obama is as clever adjusting his introductions to suit the occasion as he is in tailoring his conclusions to support his objectives. In his 'Plan for Change' his call to action encompasses a plea for support and an appeal to consider the most valuable, relevant and feasible options: "I hope you'll read my economic plan. I approved this message because bitter, partisan fights and outworn ideas of the left and the right won't solve the problems we face today. But a new spirit of unity and shared responsibility will".

The principles of *Dispositio* are quite rigid and as with anything rhetorical, you are supposed to stick to the plan. However, wherever there are rules there is room for rebellion and non-conformity. But you need to use good judgement when doing so. For example, if the counterarguments are deemed very powerful, you could address these before presenting the key messages/arguments in favour of the Proposition.

Regardless of whether you're conformist or more rebelliously inclined, the fundamentals of persuasive appeals – *Logos*, *Ethos* and *Pathos* and the principles of arrangement – *Dispositio*, are both as rudimentary to the rhetorical toolbox as are the hammer and the screwdriver to that of a carpenter. Rhetorical DIY, however slavishly applied, may not take you all the way to the White House, but rest assured that other, equally attractive destinations will be within reasonable reach!

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



Do you speak Quango?

Alastair Grant



“The onion model set out the Government’s vision of what was needed to achieve whole system change. There is an urgent need for still greater integration at every layer of the onion in front line delivery, process, strategy and governance. There remains significant practical, philosophical and research barriers to full integration. Further legislative changes at governance level alone will not automatically make it easier to address these barriers”.

together will develop a local patois or shorthand. It saves time and all understand the nuance right away. In the military, where I was, we had acronyms, terminology and slang in such vast amounts that outsiders could only guess at what we were talking about. To use such language marked us out as ‘belonging’, so we would use jargon evermore to reinforce our street cred. And fun it was too, even though I am not now a fan of jargon.

Ok that’s clear enough isn’t it! Urgh, well not exactly. This fine piece of prose was part of a recent article by Michael Gove MP in The Times newspaper about the way public services use lofty and obscure language to impress and confuse. He calls it “Speaking Quango”. It is a close relation to our old friend Jargon.



When advising a client with a presentation we tackle a number of issues:

First is the use of *Acronyms*. It’s well worn but good advice that the first time round you should say them in full. E.g. “Nothing to report, or

N.T.R.”. If the acronym is obscure then maybe say it in full a second time. Always assume that some in the audience simply do not know it unless very common, like N.A.T.O. or the U.N.

Second and more profound is to avoid *abstraction*. Each individual word in Gove’s quango quote above is fine but the sentences are abstract and so it is impossible to visualise what this onion actually is. The language is also complex and verbose. The final sentence “*Further legislative changes at governance level alone will not automatically make it easier to address these barriers*”. Could happily

be replaced by: “*Changing the law will not ensure success*”. Apart from simplifying the language the most important aid to clarity and memorability is to use concrete examples.



Third, avoid *heavy Latin-based* language. Melvin Bragg, in his book ‘The Adventure of English’, points out that the 75 most commonly used words have an Anglo-Saxon route. The 76th is the word ‘number’, with Latin roots. If you did not study Latin at school do not

We all learn from an early age that jargon is not a good thing, yet we are surrounded by it. It comes in many different forms. Jargon is terminology that is developed by a specific activity, profession or group. Like slang it is a kind of shorthand, to quickly express ideas that are frequently discussed between members of a group. Do any of you know what RSJ or CDS actually mean? Or a ‘monkey’? Or ‘That’s a 10-4’?

In many cases a standard term may be given a more precise or unique usage among practitioners in a field. Often this will cause a barrier to communication as outsiders and even insiders may not understand.

Actually it’s worse than that. Not only will the audience be distracted or confused but they are less likely to remember key messages, and they feel undermined by their inability to grasp what it’s all about.

Of course teams or groups who work closely

Advice squeezed straight from the experts



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Do you speak Quango? ...continued

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despair. Commonly used and short one syllable words are generally Anglo-Saxon. For example, where you can, try to use 'stop/start/go/but' instead of 'terminate/initiate/commence/however'. Some of you may feel that you are dumbing down by using simpler words. Be careful! Winston Churchill used a ratio of 4 Anglo-Saxon words to every Latin one, according to one of his many biographers. His ability to use language was in itself a weapon of war!

Spot the language roots of these statements: 'The directive was mandated and subsequently failed to be executed' and 'The order was given and not

much was done about it'. This comparison came from the late Alistair Cook commenting on a tendency for Americans to prefer the Latin route whilst the British used Anglo-Saxon words more.

And fourth, ruthlessly weed out jargon and quango-speak. There is difficulty with this advice which is that the speaker is so used to the words that they simply do not realise that others find their phrases meaningless.

A simple test of your use of language is to imagine you are talking to some friends across the kitchen table, maybe with a glass of wine in your hand. Would you use quango-speak then? I doubt it.

The Rain in Spain....

Ewan Pearson

Humans often just do the bare minimum required. Are we lazy animals? Or are we just very efficient, cutting out all superfluous steps? Either way, when it comes to speaking English, we tend to take short cuts with the articulation of phonemes, the building blocks of speech. And what's worse is that according to the scientists, the British are among the laziest on the planet in this department. Whereas the French for example pride themselves on their exact correct pronunciation, we Brits cut every corner we can. The consequences are that i) "Eengleesh" is a very tricky language for foreigners to speak the same way that we do as they need to learn all the short cuts, and ii) it's a dead give-away that 'Johnny' is a foreigner, "becoz dey jus' dun speak loik we do, ya-no?"

Articulation most simply is the correct voicing of a language. In English this is called 'Received Pronunciation', or RP. It's apparently not the

"Queen's English" any more. There is a bit of latitude; who for example bothers to say the three syllables in 'Wed-nes-day' or even says 'Wed-ens-day' any more? Very few, I find; the rest of us say "Wens-day" and everyone knows what we mean. At GPB we measure articulation scientifically as part of our voice analysis, comparing each of our clients to a reference of 100 of the best English speakers. Let's just say that sometimes there's room for improvement....

On the surface, RP should be a breeze. There are only 43 sounds, or phonemes, to learn to cover the entire English Dictionary (half a million words and counting..). The French only have 40 phonemes. And the Americans have 44, most of them are the same as ours, but yes we truly are two nations divided etc... Here's a little list of the English phonemes from the book 'Ship or Sheep', with a word example of where they occur. There are 19 vowels and 24 consonants:



Vowels:	Diphthongs:
i : (sheep) ʊ (book)	eɪ (tail)
ɪ (ship) u : (boot)	aɪ (fine)
e (pen) ɜ : (girl)	ɔɪ (boy)
æ (main) ə (a camera)	aʊ (house)
ʌ (cup)	əʊ (phone)
ɑ : (heart)	ɪə (beer)
ɒ (clock)	eə (chair)
ɔ : (ball)	

Consonants:
p (pen) f (shoe) h (hat)
b (baby) ʒ (television) θ (thin)
t (tin) tʃ (cherry) ð (the feather)
d (door) dʒ (jam) m (mouth)
k (key) f (fan) n (nose)
g (girl) v (van) ŋ (ring)
s (sun) w (window) l (letter, ball)
z (zoo) j (yellow) r (rain)

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Anyway, back to our 'leetel troobal' with speaking zee sounds properly. To make these sounds, our oral equipment - let's call it the Voice Club - has to move its three members, the lips, jaw and tongue in a co-ordinated way. It's a bit like driving a car - steer, pedals, gear stick. Tricky for some...

There are a range of positions for the lips (open to closed, wide to pouting) and jaw (down to up), and tongue has six main positions in articulating the phonemes, up/down, combined with front/middle/back. Have a go at this: compare what the Voice Club does when you say the letter 'p' as in page, 'zzz' as in buzz, the 'kuh' as in car, and the 'a-e' as in day. Then say 'piece of cake' quickly. Notice anything?

What we often need is to do more exercise, so here are some others for you to try:

- Sally's shop sells shellfish
- Naughty Nettie's knitting knotted nighties for the navy
- Red blackberries, blue blackberries
- Three tree twigs
- Can you imagine an imaginary menagerie-manager imagining an imaginary menagerie?

And for the advanced class:
 "Betty Botter bought some butter, but she said the butter's bitter. If I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter. But a bit of better butter is sure to make my batter better. So she bought a bit of butter, better than her bitter butter, and she put it in her batter, and the batter was not bitter. So t'was better Betty Botter bought of a bit of better butter."

Of course the brain does all the hard work controlling all the muscles at a subconscious level (phew!), and at high speed - we have clocked someone at over 12 syllables a second. So we really pay very little attention to it. Until someone says "what?" and we have to repeat ourselves, taking a little more care over our pro-nun-see-ay-shun. Or as most of us do, we just repeat the same thing slower and louder. In the English-speaking countries of the Southern hemisphere, it is a well worn joke that the number after five is pronounced either 'seeks', 'sex', or 'sucks'. Oh dear.....

The laziest member of the Voice Club is the tongue. It rests like a slumbering giant on the bottom of the mouth, occasionally jerking up, forwards or backwards, and then returns to its base for a rest. The sound made with the tongue in this position is 'uh', which explains why it is such a common sound in English, and is the most common primordial grunt uttered by a certain sort of teenager. It takes no oral effort and very little of any other sort of effort. "What?" becomes "Wuh?"

So what if we Brits are 'efficient', does it matter? Well yes it does, because poor articulation is a *serious barrier to being understood* both by fellow Brits and by the many non-Brits we increasingly need to speak to and be understood by. In consequence our audiences think less highly of us, in terms of pleasantness, dynamism, competence, and of course clarity. The result of that is a much lower score on the key measurable, *persuasiveness*.

I heard of a pitch for a multi-million pound UK contract won by French bidders, because "they spoke English better than their English competitors". Ouch.

Is there anything we can do about improving your articulation? Why yes, plenty! Anyone of a certain age who remembers the lovely Audrey Hepburn in 'My Fair Lady', a film based on the book 'Pygmalion' by George Bernard Shaw, will know that you literally can turn a sow's ear of a voice into a silk purse one, vocally speaking anyway. All it takes is exercises to train the recalcitrant tongue, the lips and jaw to do the right thing. Some Brits get by well enough, so this may be more a case of polishing up, to prevent our audiences from having to struggle to comprehend us.



And here's the rub: I like regional accents for the colour and diversity they bring to our language. These can strangle or caress our language in equal measure. How boring would it be if we all sounded exactly the same? Listen to Sir Alan Sugar or Duncan Bannatyne for their diversity. These differences still allow us to make a good guess about where someone is from, but thankfully unlike the days of Pygmalion this no longer speaks of education or class differences. So long as we can understand your accent, "Vive la difference", I say!

The Art and Business of Networking

Part 2 – The Networking Bore

Tim Farish

I'm going to tell you about the networking 'Hall of Shame', or things not to do at networking functions. While this is not an exhaustive list, it certainly gives you a guide as to what to avoid. I write this with a fair amount of personal experience having been on the receiving end of some of these crimes over the last few years. I am also grateful to colleagues and friends who have helped me by sharing their own particular stories of woe. Please feel free to email in any other suggestions or experiences that you might have had.

So, buckle-up and cringe 'cos here we go. In no particular order:

person HARD. I am not referring to the person who occasionally looks up and/or away. No, I'm referring to the serial 'twitcher' who is clearly agitated and wants to see who else is in the room yet is unable to say so! Here's a message to all of you who have recognised yourself doing this: DON'T! Far better to politely and honestly say something and move on.

3. Talking about yourself/your own business too much

This is a sure sign of either an unseasoned networker or someone completely lacking in Emotional Intelligence! There is nothing duller than listening to someone bang on about their company



1. Too much alcohol

The most obvious thing to avoid at any networking function is too much drink. Not the clear, soft variety or equivalent, but the alcoholic version. It is perfectly acceptable to 'move on' after a function to enjoy a few more drinks at your own expense but any heavy drinking is best avoided at the networking venue itself. The most important reason for this is that it is simply bad manners to drink too much of the host's booze – no matter how tempting it is. Alcohol is seen as being an integral part of lubricating relationships, especially at networking functions, but it is a double-edged sword so imbibe with caution.

2. Being distant by frequently looking over someone's shoulder to see who else is in the room

Ah! This is the one that gets my blood pressure up the most! It makes me want to kick the other

or role. There are exceptions to this but on the whole it is best to offer a teaser and leave them wanting more. If others keep asking you questions then feel free to give answers but keep them short and sweet. In other words, remember the ratio of 2 ears: 1 mouth.

4. Not listening to the speaker

The most common example of this is by forgetting a person's name. It's possible (but certainly not advisable) to forget a person's name and not offend anyone but if you forget key things they say you might as well leave the room straight away! The best way to make sure that you don't forget and offend is to listen actively to what is being said with occasional mini-summaries or deductions ("so..."). Sometimes listening at events is hard to do but maintaining good eye contact can help.

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Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



The Art and Business of Networking

Part 2 – The Networking Bore ...continued

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5. Slagging off the competition

Easy to do but this neither does you nor your company any favours. It shows a lack of creativity and confidence in your own offering if you are unable to differentiate yourself from the competition without trashing them.

6. Being uncomplimentary about the host

This one shows a real lack of class. And appreciation. Even if the chicken is rubbery and the canapés so hard they look likely to induce salmonella it is always best to be polite and sporting. The same goes for the choice of wine, venue and speaker etc. There is a very real danger that the person you're confiding in is either the organiser or is married or related to said person!

without introducing themselves? They then stand on the edge of your conversation looking uneasy, shuffling from one foot to the other, looking embarrassed or at their shoes, maybe bobbing up and down a bit? Yup, we thought so. Well if you enjoyed reading about these people as much as I enjoyed writing about them, you'll know that you should not become one of them. Stick out your hand and politely introduce yourself!

9. Barging in

China shop, Bull and Subtle are three words that spring to mind. Whilst it's good to say hello and shake hands, if two or more people are having one of those DMCs (deep and meaningful conversations), you might be better off going in gently, or not at all.

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7. Getting too familiar

We had a client recently who asked for help in how to fend off unwanted advances from attentive males at networking functions. It was an enlightening session for her and us, especially when she explained how often she thinks she'll be using our advice from now on! Remember networking events are not pick-up joints.

8. Hovering or 'the fifth wheel'

Have you ever had someone come up to your little conversation, cluster and hover on the edge of it,

10. Spraying cards

This person circles the room with the sole ambition of getting a business card in to every hand they can. There's no context, no relevance. They think the business cards will do the work, as opposed to the amount of quality conversations they have that result in cards being exchanged. Would you trust someone in this economic climate who has such scant regard for their printing costs? Nope, us neither. Best only to offer them to people you have actually had a conversation with, and then only when it's useful to both of you to do so.